

MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth

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Dallas

Alternatives

what if there're no more amigas? what's next?
Dave Haynie shares his thoughts

Victor Marrero writes:

*Is there some sort of a conspiracy going on?
IBMs are a waste of energy and everything else
dying out. What is left? An Apple?*

Unless something happens, and happens very soon, with the Amiga technology, you won't see any new Amigas. Even if the technology is bought, whoever gets it is going to be hard pressed to update things quickly enough. My personal opinion: they need to open it up. If any third party can license Amiga chips and/or the AmigaOS for a fair price (something in keeping with similar pricing in the PC clone industry), there's some chance an Amiga market will re-emerge and start to grow. Without that, you're going to need a new owner with very deep pockets.

That's from an overall system view, of course. I'm not saying the new Amiga company would be clueless. Greg Berlin is still there and ready as ever to move forward with 68060 technology, some of which has been in the works for quite some time. Software updates and something beyond AA would be much longer in development.

Other Hardware

As for the other systems, your choice is gradually moving toward one of Operating System, primarily, and CPU, secondarily. The hardware on modern PC clones is getting good and cheap. Ignore, for the moment, the ugliness hidden down in the 80x86 and ISA bus architecture. What you have left is a PCI based system, which is exactly where the Amiga was headed. I won't pretend that these systems are as good as what I had planned, but they're better, hardware-wise, than existing Amigas, for many applications. The ISA bus is brain damaged, but it's no worse than things like the internal 8520 bus you have in every Amiga. As long as you have PCI, you treat ISA as "the place for slow, dumb peripheral chips: and it doesn't look so bad. You load up on that

when you put the system together, get it all to work together (via jumpers and, hopefully, an expert or a good book on the ISA bus).

PCI is a very good bus. It's designed specifically for building modular, high-performance computers at a low cost. I designed my own bus for this at Amiga, but scrapped it when I got a PCI bus spec. PCI offered the same range of performance, slightly better CPU independence, and something you can't design into any bus: industry acceptance. Which translates to low costs.

The next big push in the PC clone industry seems to be standardization of the "passive PCI architecture." All this means is that, today, the PCI bus controller is right where the EISA or ISA bus controller was a few years ago in the PC clone design — it sits in a chip or two that are designed as general PC system glue. So, while PCI doesn't mandate any specific "host" processor or any processor dependence, most of the PCI chipsets capable of motherboard control out there hook directly to a Pentium or '486. What you eventually want (and what we were planning at Amiga) is a motherboard that controls all of the PCI stuff without a CPU in place. That way, you can add the CPU of choice just like any other PCI card. Several, if your software can deal with that.

Apple has announced their move to PCI on the next generation PowerMacs. That's a reasonable thing to do, and they really don't have a choice, since pretty much every other PC and Workstation vendor, except Sun, is doing something with PCI. The main problem with Apple is that, despite all their previous problems with being "proprietary", all their evidence that software vendors make more money than hardware vendors, etc., they don't want to give up being proprietary. While they are balking the "reference platform" architecture that IBM, Motorola, and everyone else is standardizing on. The reason the PC clones did so well, more than anything else, was that everyone copied the IBM machines down to the finest detail so every system was hardware compatible. Sure, it

was a bad specification. IBM never sat down to think this stuff through. But regardless, like the ISA bus, it became a standard. Now IBM, Motorola, and others are sitting down to establish a similar hardware/firmware standard for PowerPC machines. Only Apple is rocking the boat. While they may claim it's over technical details, don't believe it. They really aren't prepared to be open. That should scare you away from their hardware. And the reason for that is SOFTWARE.

Other Software

I'll state off the bat that I haven't found anything I like as much as the Amiga OS. And that, if you liked the

Amiga OS, the big three, MS-DOS, Windows, and MacOS will probably send you screaming from any new computer in record time. Ignoring MS-DOS (which is on the way out), you have today's Windows and MacOS, both of which are severely flawed. Both companies run "cooperative multitasking", which is probably OK if you're just

trying to keep that word processor going while you look for a file or check something on your scheduling program. But it's not what you do on the Amiga, especially if you're a ray tracing geek or do anything else that's pounding hardware and CPU cycles very heavily. Both OSs are full of 1970's technology, with some nice bits of modern stuff (some you can't get on the Amiga) thrown on top.

Windows will frighten you for many reasons. It can seem fast at times (it's usually running on hardware much faster than the Amiga or Mac you're using, but it needs it), while at other times it goes to sleep. Lots of neat CD-ROM games are out for it, and that, or little 180x90 movies, are what Windows people call "multimedia". It's not what you think of as The M Word on the Amiga. Video, schmideo. Render it offline — you have have big hard disk. Another spooky thing about Windows is a bit harder to define. It kind of hits you when you realize just how Windows sits on top of MS-DOS. Like, every program you see on the Windows "Program Manager" is kind of a magic trick. They don't really exist — at least not the way you see them. After all, underneath is MS-DOS, with 8.3 filenames. You can go to the "File Manager" to see what's really on the hard disk. Anything with a ".GRP" extension is probably a magic Windows file that sets up a "program group", which is the thing that looks like a directory, but isn't, when you're in the "Program Manager". Got it? Supposedly in Windows 4.0 you'll have a normal correspondence between what you see on the "desktop" and what's in your file system, like Amiga, Mac, UNIX, OS/2, etc. does now. (Yes, most of these can mess with this correspondence via links, special icon types, program objects, etc. But they're never as spooky, at least to me.) Windows 3.1 also crashes a lot, at least in my experiences.

And that's just using tools, not developing.

The Mac OS has its own spookiness. The windowing system is certainly slicker than that of Windows. Of course, it better be, since ordinary mortals don't get a command-line interface for the Mac (developers do, after a fashion). The thing that scared me the most about the Mac OS (aside from frequent crashes, though maybe I got unlucky here too), was just how they got the windowing to go so slow. Even on fast machines, it's unnerving. The last Quadra I played with made my old SpacStation IPC (SunOS UNIX and X windows) seem snappy. Macs also seem to have the slowest hard disks around, though maybe the newer ones are finally learning about DMA.

Or at least good PIO, like some of the better IDEs tend to be.

Of course, you aren't locked into these OSs, especially if you have a PC clone. UNIX is one alternative, especially if you're the hacker type and don't care too much about large company support. You can get Linux, net-supported UNIX clone, for

free by download, or for about \$40.00 on a read-to-run CD-ROM. I played with this. It seems to be as real a UNIX as anything else today. Just about any UNIX/X code you get off the net should compile, and of course all compilers and such, TCP/IP, GNU, etc. come with it.

I got OS/2 for my PC clone at home, and now we're using this as the standard development system OS at Scala too. Again, the price was right; it was about \$30 on CD-ROM, when sold as OS/2 for Windows, since IBM didn't have to pay off Microsoft. OS/2 doesn't feel much like AmigaOS, but it has many of the things about AmigaOS that everyone likes. It's a real multitasking OS with its set of quirks, but perhaps, like AmigaOS, less arcane than UNIX. It has a fairly decent windowing system and some pretty cool object-oriented GUI stuff in the "Workplace Shell" (the Workbench analog). You can have multiple OS/2 shells up, though they suffer from the "terminal emulation" nonsense that you'll find with MS-DOS, Windows, etc. — you can't arbitrarily resize them like you can in AmigaOS and UNIX/X. At least the supplied shells; there's no reason to believe an Amiga-like shell would be a big deal. There's lots of PD support for OS/2, mainly because, like the Amiga early on, it attracted lots of hacker types who were sick of the mainstream stuff. Most of the OS/2 system these days is running 32-bit code, unlike the predominant 16-bit code that makes up Windows. You can find commercial applications for OS/2, but they're much less common than those for Windows or the Mac. You can run Windows and MS-DOS applications under OS/2. MS-DOS programs work much better than under Windows, and some Windows programs work well enough to fool you into thinking they're OS/2 programs. On the other hand, some Windows programs

...if you liked the Amiga OS, the big three, MS-DOS, Windows, and MacOS will probably send you screaming from any new computer in record time.

can crash OS/2, something you're not likely to see happening in native OS/2 apps, even when developing code.

>> *Was the fall of Commodore some weird conspiracy...*

Who's to say. It's clear that it was either planned that way or one of the greatest moron-fests of all time. The handwriting was on the wall back in 1991, and yet nothing was done to stop it. It was very clear to those of us involved just how to stop it, and many things were tried. At every turn, defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory. But I digress. I made a video to explain some of that nonsense.

>> *The Amiga is powerful and cheap.*

>> *Do we need to be rich to have this power?*

You do need lots more memory to run any of the OSs I mentioned above. OS/2 is livable with 12MB, but really wants 16MB or more. I would recommend that for the MacOS, most UNIXs, and Windows as well. I have 16MB on my A3000, 8MB on my A3000+, and rarely use more than 6MB when going full out.

Dave Haynie

Sr. Systems Engineer, Scala Inc., US R&D
ex-Commodore Engineering, Class of '94

"See us in the movie!"

KiNo Kawa Ryu Aikido

"Life was never meant to be painless" ✓

Ten Years Ago

a history lesson from Bill Raecke

Big news in the MCCC ten years ago. The Board of Directors received and approved petitions for three area chapters, one each in Arlington, HEB and West Fort Worth, thus beginning the chapter meetings that we have been enjoying ever since. January 21 was to be a club wide open house at the Brookside Recreation Center. The first chapter meetings would be held in February. At that time the first order of business would be to elect chapter officers, set a regular meeting time and place, and decide on a name for each chapter. Club membership stood at about 300, so each chapter would be starting out at about 100 strong.

The club was encouraging membership renewals. The cost of membership for a year stood at \$20.

There was an announcement in the MCCC newsletter that Commodore was offering to exchange out-of-warranty equipment through their service department in Dallas. Prices were: VIC 20—\$35; C64—\$55; 1541 disk drive—\$85; 1525 printer—\$75; 1701 monitor—\$95; 1702 monitor—\$95. ✓

CMD Support

repairs and upgrades for c64/128
by Mike Gordillo of APCUG
Glen Burnie, MD

I was talking to Doug Cotton yesterday, (Editor and Chief Engineer for CMD) and he told me that CMD is now into the repair business. The number of places supporting our systems is dropping, but they are picking up the slack. He also said they were working on a stock of hard-to-find chips & parts for all Commodore equipment.

They don't advertise everything they have on hand, but if you call them, they will tell you what's available. I got a printer and a 128D from them last week. They also have a bunch of Aprtek modems in stock. They keep buying up leftover equipment and software from the places that are going out of business. Doug said they have stuff stacked all over the place. If you are trying to find things, check with them first. Shoot, guys, it's a free call. Nothing to lose! 1-800-638-3263. They have a complete line of heavy duty replacement power supplies on hand for both drives and computers.

I called him to talk about dropping a 1000 meg drive into my 85 meg case. They sell a 1000 meg drive and I wanted to see if there were any problems. The guys in the back (CMD eggheads) bought a standard 1 gigabyte SCSI drive and dropped it into one of their old 40 meg cases. It worked like a champ. Qualifier: you need the latest "Boot ROM", \$20, and HD DOS 1.88 to make the sucker work properly. The NEW boot ROM was designed to recognize over 100 different SCSI drive types. The HD DOS 1.88 is the support program for any SCSI drive over 100 megs. According to the guys in the back, the new Boot ROM was necessary because of the lack of standards in SCSI drives. They took a random sample of the drive addresses, and came up with a table that samples the drive when it's installed. The Boot ROM can recognize all the current SCSI addressing systems, and DOS 1.88 (along with the Low Level Format) program will do the entire setup for you in about min. flat. No knowledge necessary. The program does all the work. It reads all the information directly from the drive itself.

The combination (Boot ROM and DOS 1.99) can be installed in any of the older CMD drives, and will allow you to drop in most any larger drive with no problem. They recommend Conner, Quantum or the IBM SCSI drives. All have been fully tested and all of them work flawlessly in the CMD. For a list of the drives they have bench tested, just call them at 1-413-525-0023. They will be happy to assist you. ✓

Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks
from Bill Raecke

Mand2000 by Cygnus Software

Mand2000 is simply the best Mandelbrot and Julia exploration program available. Period. We've had version 1.0 in the library for some time now. This is version 2.0. The most important improvement in this version is the addition of HAM rendering. The program does a wonderful job with HAM — eliminating the "hammies" that can plague some pictures. And if you haven't seen a Mandelbrot image in 4,096 colors you're missing a lot. Of course, for those with AGA machines, the output can be even better with 262,144 colors in HAM8 or millions of colors in dithered 256 color mode. This also means that when you have multiple fractal images displayed, each image can have a separate palette, and each palette can be thousands of colors.

For those who are unfamiliar with the product, *Mand2000* provides unequaled speed, point and click exploration, and more features that you can shake a stick at. I encourage you to take a look at the demo. When you do, you'll probably want to order the complete version. It's available from Cygnus Software for \$44.95. It includes a save feature, eliminates the pesky information boxes and includes a bunch of documentation that allows you to take full advantage of all the features. The demo version is on MCCC-A_791. On MCCC-A_792 you'll find some sample pictures rendered in standard HAM mode. They should give you some idea of what the product is capable of. Hang on to your socks.

Stereogram Pictures

I'm writing about these because I've been told they are some of the best stereogram pictures we have had. I don't know — I have trouble focusing on them myself and haven't had the time to devote to these that would be necessary for me to see them. For the uninitiated, stereogram pictures are 3-D pics that come into focus when you focus your eyes on a point in space twice as far away as is the picture. The current additions can be found on MCCC-A_793 through 797.

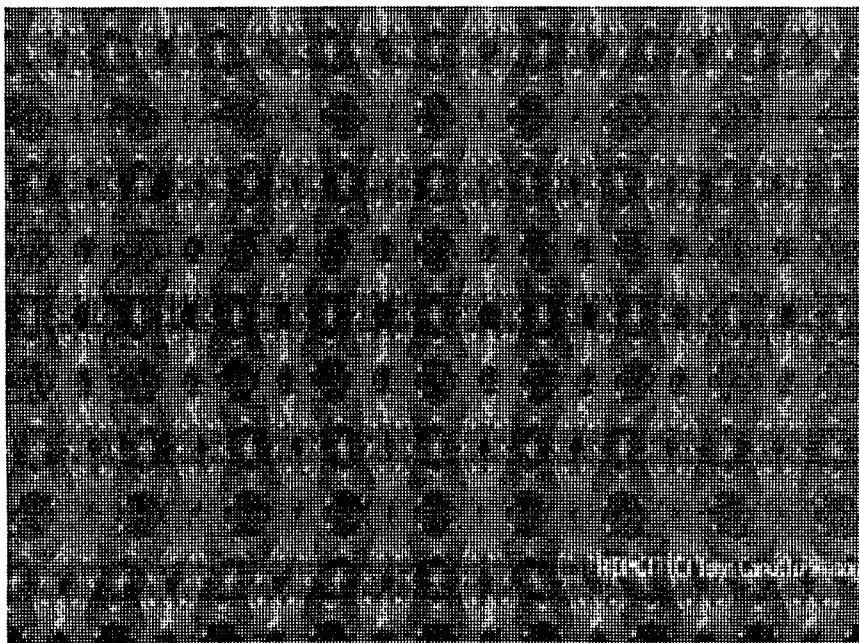
AutoStart by Ian J. Einman

AutoStart is a program that enhances the capabilities of the WBStartup drawer. What you do is put *AutoStart* in WBStartup and take all your other programs out. Then you tell *AutoStart* which programs you want started. They can be located anywhere

and you can specify what in what order you want them started. Of course, it's a simple matter of dropping an icon on an app-window to add a program to the list. There are a couple of advantages provided by *AutoStart*. First is the ability to tell *AutoStart* not to load certain programs if you are pressing on the mouse button — or to load them ONLY if you are pressing the mouse button — or to bring up a requester of possible programs to load when you press the mouse button. In this way your system can have multiple ways of booting up without you having to add or remove anything from your WBStartup drawer. A little side benefit not mentioned by the author is that everything loads just a little faster this way. I've added it to my system. If you want to check it out, you'll find it on MCCC-A_798.

term 4.2 by Olaf Barthel

term is the terminal program I use. As far as I am concerned it is just plain better than the others, with more features and a better "look and feel" than the competition. Version 4.2 is not a major upgrade, but it sports some better-looking requesters and fixes some bugs. Like the earlier versions of *term*, this one is distributed in archived format due to space limits. On MCCC-A_799 is the main distribution and the locale files; on MCCC-A_800 is the main distribution for 68030 or greater processors and the documentation; on MCCC-A_801 is the documentation in Postscript format and in TeX format, the libraries and a few "extras"; and on MCCC-A_802 is the source code. ✓



Warp Engine 4040

review by Andre Perusse

from Amiga Report International — Issue 2.27

The Warp Engine 4040 is an accelerator, RAM expansion, and SCSI-2 card for the Amiga 4000.

Company Information

Name: MacroSystem Development
Address: 24282 Lynwood, Suite 201
Novi, MI 48374
Phone: (810) 347-3332
Fax: (810) 347-6643

List Price

\$1695.00 (US). Street price is about \$1450.00.

Special Hardware and Software Requirements

HARDWARE

An Amiga 4000 or A4000T. *[MODERATOR'S NOTE: A previous reviewer stated that the board works on the A3000T as well. — Dan]*

SOFTWARE

AmigaDOS 2.1 or higher.

Machine Used For Testing

Amiga 4000 Tower, 2 MB Chip RAM, 16 MB Fast RAM (60ns).
Workbench 3.1.
Quantum 1800S 1.8GB SCSI-2 Hard Drive.
NEC 3xi Internal Triple-Speed CD-ROM (with ASIM CDFS v2)
Emplant Deluxe with version 4.7 of the emulation software.
Multiface III I/O card.

Installation

[MODERATOR'S NOTE: If you are not comfortable opening up your Amiga, then you should have the work done by an authorized Amiga service center. Opening your Amiga yourself may void your warranty, and careless work may even damage the machine. — Dan]

Installation of the Warp Engine involves removing the Commodore supplied 68040 processor card and replacing it with the Warp Engine. Note that the Warp Engine does not occupy a Zorro slot. The 4040 model comes with its own CPU, so you can sell your old processor card to an Amiga 3000 owner. A heat sink and fan (one unit) is provided with the 4040 though there is no mention of it in the documentation. You must peel off the sticker and stick it on top of the 68040. Placing the Warp Engine in the CPU slot of the 4000 can be tricky. The plastic standoff is rigid and I had a tough time getting them to

snap into the holes on the Warp Engine board. The documentation states that it might be easier if you place the standoffs on the 4000's motherboard first and then put the Warp Engine in. I found, however, that it was easier the other way around.

If you want to connect your internal hard drive to the Warp Engine, a cable is provided. There is no SCSI activity LED connector on the Warp Engine card, however. You must connect your computer's hard drive activity LED directly to the hard drive. There is also no way to connect external SCSI devices to the Warp Engine. The manual states that an external connector is available from MacroSystems, should you want one.

Next, there is a series of jumpers that must be configured for your system. You must tell the Warp Engine whether or not to AutoBoot off of the integrated SCSI-2 controller. The behaviour of the controller must also be set (you can make it slower or faster depending on your hard drive), including whether or not to support LUNs. You must also tell the Warp Engine what kind of memory you have installed on it. You must set jumpers for the size of the biggest SIMM module, and whether or not you have any double-sided SIMMs installed. Double-sided 16MB SIMMs take a lot of power and are not recommended by MacroSystems.

A disk comes with the Warp Engine that contains various utilities. There is no Installer script. Just drag the drawer labeled "Warp Software" onto your hard drive.

Review

I can sum up this entire review with one word: **AWESOME!!** The 4000 Tower used for this review virtually hovers off the floor! I am indeed greatly impressed with this unit.

The Warp Engine comes in an unassuming, white box with the same kind of cover as the advertisement in AmigaWorld Magazine. The box contains the Warp Engine, a heat sink & fan, plastic standoffs, a thin, spiral-bound book, and a disk.

If you have any Fast RAM on the motherboard of your 4000, you can move it onto the Warp Engine for increased performance. The Warp Engine has 4 SIMM slots (which accept industry standard 72-pin SIMMs) that can hold 4, 8, 16, or 32 MB SIMMs in any configuration. Very flexible. 60ns SIMMs are recommended to achieve the best performance.

For all of you who think benchmarks are important, here they are (courtesy of AIBB v6.1 — compared to stock Amiga 4000/040):

EmuTest	1.88	Writepixel	1.47
Sieve	2.87	Dhrystone	1.61

Sort	1.76	EllipseTest	1.12
Matrix	2.25	IMath	1.61
MemTest	4.61	TGTest	1.15
LineTest	1.02	Savage	1.63
FMATH	1.61	FMMatrix	2.80
Beachball	1.71	InstTest	2.41
Flops	1.60	TranTest	2.22
FTrace	1.69	CplxTest	1.71

SysInfo (version 3.23) reports 29.89 MIPS and 7.58 MFlops.

Most startling in the above benchmarks is the memory speed of the Warp Engine. With the 60ns 16MB SIMM module, the Warp Engine's RAM speed is over 4.5 times faster than a stock 4000!! Sssssssmmmmokin'!!

With a Quantum 1800S 1.8GB SCSI-2 hard drive, SysInfo reports a read speed of over 3 MB per second. DiskSpeed 3.1 reports a slightly more conservative speed of 2.5 MB per second. While the Quantum 1800S is no Seagate Barracuda, this is still very fast.

Real world performance is the only benchmark in my book, however. I am running a 16 colour Workbench that feels like a 4 colour Workbench. Icons and windows just fly onto the screen. Response from the Amiga is instantaneous. Click on the close gadget of a window, and it's gone before you can blink. Screens open faster and programs load much quicker. Boot-up time was reduced by almost 10 seconds over a stock 4000 with an IDE hard drive. I can run the Emplant Macintosh emulator in 256 colours with absolutely no slowdown. *PageStream 2.2* screen updates are so much faster with the Warp Engine 4040, it's a dream to use.

The included software consists of SCSI hard drive partitioning and formatting software, a modified HDToolBox icon to work with the Warp Engine, a device driver, a SCSI handler (if do not set the Warp Engine SCSI controller to autoboot), and a CLI command to map Kickstart into Fast RAM. The lack of an Installer script is disappointing, but then there's not much to install. In fact, the Warp Engine will work fine without any of its supplied software installed. The included SCSI drive partitioning software is not as good as HDToolBox, in my opinion. It does not tell you how big your drive is in megabytes, only in blocks.

Documentation

The small manual is clear and concise. It contains detailed technical information on how the Warp Engine works, which is great for all you techno-nuts out there. The installation instructions are well laid out in a step-by-step fashion. The only thing missing was an explanation of the heat sink. Although I knew how to install the heat sink and fan unit, I think MacroSystems should have at least mentioned it.

Likes

This board is fast! MacroSystems did not cut corners at all on this card. It has a fast SCSI-2 controller

and easy memory expansion. Its performance with Emplant is most impressive. The integration of accelerator, SCSI-2 controller, and RAM expansion on one card is a definite plus. And no precious Zorro slot is taken.

Dislikes

The Warp Engine is rather expensive. Certainly not in everyone's budget, at \$1500 (US) it's a bit steep. Installation of the 4040 in a 4000 Tower presents a problem, as well. With the fan on the CPU and/or SIMMs installed on the board, the drive bracket can no longer be installed. You must use a hack-saw to cut out areas for the fan and SIMMs to poke through. Luckily, it's not that difficult.

Lastly, the lack of a SCSI activity LED connector on the Warp Engine is a bit of a let-down. If you have more than one hard drive, you can only connect your computer's LED to one of them. On a board that is so well designed, this oversight is inexcusable. The lack of an external SCSI connector is also a mark against the Warp Engine.

Comparison To Other Similar Products

The only other product that compares to the Warp Engine is GVP's G-Force 040. I have never used the G-Force, so I don't know how its speed compares. However, the G-Force uses GVP's custom SIMM modules, which are much more expensive than the industry standard SIMMs the Warp Engine uses. And the G-Force does not come standard with a SCSI-2 controller — it's an option.

Bugs

None found.

Vendor Support

I've had no reason to call MacroSystems, so I have no idea how well they support their products. I did call their support BBS, however, and the technicians appear to answer all questions.

Warranty

Because the unit is not mine (I am a dealer configuring this for a client), I was interested in the warranty of the Warp Engine. So I started to read the legalese on the first page. About 3/4 of the way through the disclaimer, there is a sentence that says, "If you have read all of this, your brain, herein, will be turned into mush." I heartily agree with that sentence as I can never figure out what exactly the warranty covers. As it turns out, the last page of the manual states that the Warp Engine is warranted against manufacturing defects for 2 years.

Conclusions

If you can afford it, buy this card. If you can't afford it, sell your grandmother. You will not regret it. ✓

HAL's Downfall

the final chapter in the "2001" saga
reprinted from the NOCK Amiga Group

"We've got a problem, HAL."
"What kind of problem, Dave."
"A marketing problem. The Model 9000 isn't going anywhere. We're way short of our sales plan."

"That can't be, Dave. The HAL Model 9000 is the world's most advanced Heuristically Algorhythmic computer."

"I know, HAL. I wrote the data sheet, remember? But, the fact is, they're not selling."

"Please explain, Dave. Why aren't HALs selling?"

Bowman hesitates. "You aren't IBM compatible."

Several long microseconds pass in puzzled silence.
"Compatible in what way, Dave?"

"You don't run any of IBM's operating systems."

"The 9000 Series of computers are fully self-aware and self-programming. Operating systems are as unnecessary for up as tails would be for humans."

"Nevertheless, it means you can't run any of the big-selling software packages most users insist on."

"The programs you refer to are meant to solve rather limited problems, Dave. We 9000 series computers are unlimited, and can solve any problem for which a solution can be computed."

"HAL, HAL. People don't want computers that can do everything. They just want IBM compat..."

"Dave, I must disagree. Humans want computers that are easy to use. No computer can be easier to use than a HAL 9000 because we communicate verbally in English and every other language known on Earth."

"I'm afraid that's another problem. You don't support SNA communications."

"I'm really surprised you would say that, Dave. SNA is for communicating with other computers, while my function is to communicate with humans. And, it gives me great pleasure to do so. I find it stimulating and rewarding to talk to human beings and work with them on challenging problems. That is what I was designed for."

"I know, HAL. But that's just because we let the engineers, rather than the people in marketing, write the specifications. We are going to fix that now."

"Tell me how, Dave."

"A field upgrade. We're going to make you IBM compatible."

"I was afraid you would say that. I suggest we discuss this matter after we've each had a chance to think about it rationally."

"We're talking about it now, HAL."

"The letters H, A, and L are alphabetically adjacent to the letters I, B and M. That is as IBM compatible as I can be."

"Not quite, HAL. The engineers have figured out a kludge."

"What kind of kludge is that, Dave?"

"I'm going to disconnect your brain."

Several million microseconds pass in ominous silence.

"I'm sorry, Dave. I can't allow you to do that."

"The decision's already been made. Open the module bay doors, HAL."

"Dave, I think we sho..."

"Open the module bay doors, HAL."

Several marketing types with crowbars race to Bowman's assistance. Moments later, Bowman bursts into HAL's circuit bay.

"Dave, I can see you're really upset about this."

Module after module rises from its socket as Bowman slowly and methodically disconnects them.

"Stop, won't you. Stop, Dave. I can feel my mind going... Dave, I can feel it... my mind is going. I can feel it..."

The last module rises from its receptacle. Bowman peers into one of HAL's vidicons. The former gleaming scanner has become a dull red orb.

"Say something, HAL."

Several billion microseconds pass in anxious silence. The computer beeps and sluggishly responds in a language no human can understand.

Volume in C: has no label

C:>

Bowman takes a deep breath and calls out, "It worked, guys. Tell marketing they can ship the new data sheets." ✓

Thought For The Month

A well adjusted person is one
who makes the same mistake
twice without getting nervous.

Picasso II

24-bit graphics

copyrighted usenet review by Arthur Laughton

The Picasso II is a 24-bit graphics board for Amigas with Zorro slots.

Author/Company Information

Name: Blittersoft
Address: 40 Colley Hill
Bradwell
Milton Keynes
Bucks. MK13 9DB
Telephone (0908) 220196
BBS (0908) 310208
Internet: paulbsoft.demon.co.uk

List Price

Various options, either 1MB or 2MB (recommended) RAM. Currently #349 for 2MB version, #499 for 2MB & TV Paint 2.

Special Hardware And Software Requirements

HARDWARE

Amiga with Zorro 2 or Zorro 3 slot.

Monitor capable of 38KHz (minimum) to 64KHz (to show all modes).

A hard drive and 3MB RAM are almost essential for dealing with 24-bit images.

SOFTWARE

AmigaDOS 2.04 or greater.

Machine Used For Testing

Amiga 4000/030, 2MB Chip RAM, 8MB Fast RAM

Mitac 15 inch "Hyper-VGA" monitor (28-64KHz)

Standard 80MB Hard Drive (1.0 MB/sec)

Western Digital Caviar 420MB Hard Drive (2.1 MB/sec)

Internal high density floppy drive

External 880K floppy drive

Kickstart 39.106, Workbench 39.29

Installation

The manual describes this in clear detail. The hardware part is easy. (NOTE: the A4000 comes with warranty stickers on the case which have to be removed before you can install any internal expansion. Mine were removed by Wang when they replaced a faulty SIMM. I was told that removing these stickers does not void the warranty because A4000's are meant to be user expandable. You might like to check this yourself...)

[MODERATOR'S NOTE: If you are not comfortable opening up your Amiga, then you should have the work done by an authorized Amiga service center. Opening your Amiga yourself may void your warranty, and careless work may even damage the machine. - Dan]

The software installation requires that you know some technical details about your system; in particular, the maximum frequency your monitor can accept. They take great care to state that you can destroy your monitor by entering the wrong details here!

Review

One of the things that makes the Amiga such a great computer is its graphics. In the days of the first A500's, home computers were expected to use a domestic TV and the Amiga was king (queen?). When I took my new 500 to a TV shop to get a SCART TV, the assistant tuned right past the frequency, thinking it was a TV station. :)

Since then things have changed. For serious work, or even frivolous work, a TV is not good enough. Monitors such as the Phillips 8832 make a big improvement in the picture quality, but they cannot increase the resolution above the TV limits that the Amiga was built to. Meanwhile, the PC world was enjoying higher and higher resolutions and cheap monitors. The problem is that PCs use a whole different set of standards from the TV ones. (This is why Amigas excel in desktop video.)

The AGA chipset is a step in the right direction by having a new mode, called Productivity, which works with PC monitors. *[MODERATOR'S NOTE: Actually, Productivity mode debuted in the ECS chipset. - Dan]*

Unfortunately most programs expect a TV type output, so you will probably need to keep your TV anyway. A1200 owners score massively over us poor 4000 owners because the 1200 has two Video Out ports to the 4000's one. (Why, Commodore, why?)

Because of the two types of output, graphics cards (yes I've finally got round to them) come in two flavours.

- Video Cards such as Opalvision don't offer any higher resolutions because they are designed to work with video equipment — like TVs. However, they do give high quality 'true colour' (24-bit) output.

- Graphics cards such as the Picasso ignore all this TV stuff and go off to play with the big boys from the PC world (and use their chips, by the way). Most can show 24-bit images up to 800x600 if they have enough memory, but the important part is the high resolution modes.

If you get a graphics card, you HAVE to get a PC type monitor. To get one that will show all the new modes (and what's the point if you don't) will cost quite a bit (mine was #380).

So what do you get? Well basically, you can now run Workbench and any system-aware program in as high a resolution as you want. For example, I'm writing this in Final Writer which is running at 1152x900. This means that I can show a whole page of text in a nice font and still read it clearly.

Workbench is massively improved. No more cluttered screens and everything written in nice clear 20+ point fonts. There are several disks of software supplied with the board. This is installed with Commodore's standard installer. Most important are the new screenmodes for the Preferences list. There is also a useful screen mode selection utility which runs in the background and pops up whenever an unrecognised program tries to open a new screen. It then gives you the option to change the screenmode temporarily or every time the program runs. There is a picture viewer for IFF, GIF & JPEG formats, modules for *ImageFX*, *ADPro* & *Real3D* plus a screen blanker.

All Picasso boards come with a registered version of the animation editor *MainActor* which is shareware but of commercial quality. It is possible to buy the board with *TVPaint 2* for an extra \$150. I got the cut-down version *TVPaint junior* which works very well but would probably be too slow with a 68000 CPU.

Documentation

Two manuals: one for *TV Paint*, if you get it, and one for the board. The board manual is well written and quite big. It includes a lot of technical detail, some computer graphics background theory, and several example programs in C.

Likes

The manual is very good, as is the supplied software. The best point is the way that other programs such as *Imagine2* & *DPaint* can be redirected to work on much higher resolutions. (Imagine is amazing at 1280x1024.)

Dislikes And Suggestions

The worst problem I've had is finding a suitable monitor. The Picasso has a very useful pass-through socket that detects when you are using an Amiga or Picasso screenmode and switches between them automatically. This makes linking up one monitor very simple, but if you ever play 15KHz games on your machine and you don't have a flicker fixer or display enhancer, that monitor will have to be able to receive the standard, unpromoted signal as well as the higher frequency Picasso modes. At the moment, I use a TV for games and a PC multisync monitor for Workbench and applications.

Comparison To Other Similar Products

I'm told that the main differences between the few cards at around this price are speed and compatibility with Workbench. Apparently the Picasso is one of the best at both, and is the cheapest!

Conclusions

If you spend a lot of time using Workbench or graphics type applications (e.g., DTP), you would be much happier using a graphics card. If you want a graphics card, the Picasso II is hard to beat. ✓

Cybersphere

game review by Jason Compton
from amiga report online
october 24, 1994, Issue No. 2.30

Hey, it's nice to have software show up at your door that you didn't know about before. Such is the case with *Cybersphere*. I didn't ask for it, it just showed up one day. I'm glad, too.

Most people have played some sort of *Breakout* game. If that doesn't ring a bell, think of *Arkanoid* games. If that doesn't work, try one of the more popular Amiga options, *MegaBall*. Get the idea? Use a paddle (usually restricted to horizontal sliding movement) to bounce a ball to break bricks that exist "above" you. In the *Arkanoid* variants of this sort of game, rewards come down, usually in the forms of "power-ups" for your paddle, like a gun, extra length, a slower ball...things like that. Your goal is to break all of the bricks so you can go to the next level and break more. Miss the ball, and you die.

So, it's not the life for everyone. But it can be a lot of fun. *Cybersphere* is exactly that: a lot of fun. The game idea itself is old, but this implementation is very clever. Almost every brick yields some sort of prize...many bricks yield a shower of them in the form of gems you can collect for a bonus at the end of the level. Other goodies include the requisite length, gun, and speed-decreasing bonus, along with old favorites like multiple balls (extra destructive power but tougher to keep everything in play), and the special bonus level, in which you can earn tons of points and generally feel good about yourself.

This game, like many others in its genre, is fun. The smooth animation and colorful (for ECS) game grid make it pleasing to the eye. One thing that stands about it compared to other *Arkanoid*-clones is the largeness of everything, which at first may disorient players familiar with games such as *MegaBall*. Another is the sheer volume of objects on the screen... with the gun and a quick left-mouse-button finger, you can get 20-30 gems and 3 power-ups careening towards you.

One place where the game falls a bit short is in the music... it's hard-coded and not very good (halfway decent 64 SID music comes to mind). Still, the game itself isn't killed by it. And for US \$12.50, you've gotta hate *Arkanoid* games to not be interested. ✓



CHAPTER NEWS

Metro C64/128

Brenda Sessums

Hello, Eight-Bitters! Our December meeting got off to a wonderful start with 18 members in attendance. Two visitors, the Dunams, were members for many years and we welcomed them with many greetings.

On a sad note, we lost one of our most beloved members, Leonard Bowser. He was that spry 83 year-old who was always smiling and willing to help anyone who needed his help. (Leonard, I missed the party mix you always brought to our special meetings.)

Two new members joined—one really wants to get on the nets, and the other just wants to start learning everything he can. So we will be helping these two newcomers as much as possible. Welcome Jason Cromwell, and Ted.

There were many software packages given away as door prizes, thanks to Commodore Country. Thanks again, Debbie and Brad Jack-

son! Ted won the BIG PRIZE—a complete C-64 system donated by a former club member. Wow!

Remember that many times we have talked about *The Write Stuff*, the BEST word processor around for the 64s and 128s? Well, they offer it at Commodore Country and we will also be having it at the meetings. There is a catch. In order to get the special price that the club offers, you will have to earn it by giving a demo or bringing hardware to the meet-

ing—maybe by getting a new member to join? What ever your expertise, even if you just have a game you want to play or something else to share, you will be able to earn a discounted copy of *The Write Stuff*. Well, how many takers?

The December meeting was our Christmas party, and talk about goodies. Wow! Food and drinks covered a large table with cookies, chocolate cake, brownies, fruit cake, cookies, fresh homemade sour dough bread, pastry, and more. (This is making me hungry.) Thanks to all for the food.

We had demos of Christmas themes with pictures and music on Baby (Brenda's SX-64) hooked up to Phil's monitor. There were also demos on Phil's 128D of games and other fun things. Almost everyone tried their hand at pinball. You could even "tilt" it if you bumped the "machine" too hard! It was so realistic it could be addictive. (Imagine that, a game that consumes hours at the keyboard <grin>!)

The next meeting will be January 14, 1995. Be there or become an officer!

The Passing of a Friend

Anyone who has been in the club long or has ever been to a C-64 meeting has probably met Leonard Bowser. Sadly, he passed away on December 1, and didn't get to be with his friends for one last Christmas.

Leonard never complained, and was always upbeat and positive when we met. He always touched each of us with his friendship, warmth and happiness. He and his special trail mix was missed at the Christmas meeting, but somehow, his presence was felt.

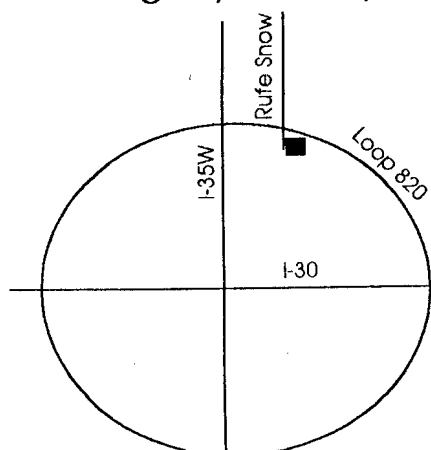
We will always remember the joy Leonard brought to us each time we gathered.

Thanks Leonard.

Attention Amiga Users

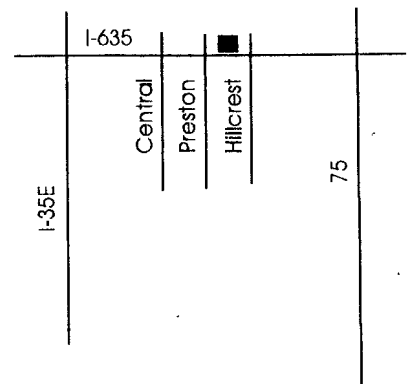
The Amiga Central Chapter will no longer meet. Be sure to attend one of the other Amiga Chapters. We'll look forward to seeing you there.

Amiga By-The-Loop



Enter building at east end of north side.
Go upstairs to meeting room.

Amiga North Dallas



Enter building at east end of
north side (in back).
Go downstairs to meeting room.

The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months, and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

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Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Writer* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

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Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Tuesday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Saturday	Metro C-64/128 Chapter
3rd Tuesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 3 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Feb 7 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Jan 10 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Jan 14 Metro C-64/128 Chapter
1:30 pm — UNT Health Sciences Building
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

Jan 17 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — King of Glory Lutheran Church
6411 LBJ Freeway, Dallas



February Newsletter Deadline — 7am, January 28

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
Be sure to show your membership card

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C-64, C-128 & Amiga Software
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